

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

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Before the

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC SECURITY, INFRASTRUCTURE
PROTECTION AND CYBERSECURITY
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Chairman Lungren, Congresswoman Sanchez, and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you on our domestic Registered Traveler (RT) Program. The Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) mission—to protect the Nation's transportation systems to ensure the freedom of movement for people and commerce—continues to be a vital one, nearly four years after the tragic events of 9/11 that motivated TSA's creation. As you know, since its inception TSA has relied upon a layered "system-of-systems" approach to aviation security, because no single security layer can be guaranteed to be 100% effective.

The RT Program should prove to be an important part of our layered system-of-systems. The Aviation and Transportation Security Act (ATSA), P.L. 107-71 directed TSA to explore options for expedited travel at airports. The mission of the RT Program, now being tested in five pilots, is to expedite travel for those who qualify to participate while enhancing aviation security.

The Registered Traveler Concept and Benefits

The RT Program is a security program that provides customer service benefits, while enhancing aviation security. The program provides TSA with valuable information to conduct threat assessments and verify identity, and enables it to concentrate its resources more effectively, while offering qualified applicants an expedited travel experience. To participate, applicants provide personal information which will serve as the basis of a security assessment. That assessment includes a name-based check against Federal government watch lists and databases of outstanding wants and warrants. Applicants also provide biometric data (fingerprints and iris data) which are used for identity verification. When an approved participant travels from his host airport, his identity and status under the program is confirmed at RT kiosks located near the security checkpoint.

While approved participants experience expedited security screening, they still go through normal security screening at the checkpoint. However, unless they alarm the screening equipment, they are not selected for additional screening. Because RT travelers are largely exempt from selectee screening and have access to dedicated or designated security lines and lanes, they move through the checkpoint screening system more quickly than the general public. Additional benefits to participants, including exemption from requirements to remove shoes and jackets and to take computers out of their cases, will be considered in the future. The decision on whether to include these or other benefits will, of course, be security based.

The RT Program enhances security by allowing TSA to concentrate resources where they will be most effective. Essentially, because RT Program participants are “known,” that is they have already undergone a security threat assessment and biometrically verify their identities every time they fly, TSA can focus enhanced screening at the airport on “unknown” individuals. Reducing the population of “unknown” travelers enhances security by allowing a greater correlation between resource allotment and passengers who are more likely to potentially pose a threat.

Furthermore, less time spent on “known” low risk travelers frees resources to process the general public more rapidly, creating a secondary benefit in terms of easing checkpoint congestion. Thus, Registered Traveler should strengthen both security and customer service at the Nation’s airports. A more efficient screening should benefit not only Registered Travelers directly but also the traveling public as a whole.

And, overall, TSA is committed to protecting the privacy interests of travelers. The respect for these interests infuses all our decision-making, including determinations of how we collect personal data and how that data is stored. I would like to emphasize that that the RT Program is and will be wholly voluntary and eventually will be funded through fees to participate in the program--only those who wish to take advantage of the program will be required to provide personal data. Participation in the program is in no way required as a condition of travel.

Five Federal Pilot Programs

TSA, in partnership with Northwest, United, Continental, and American Airlines, and with management assistance of private contractors, Unisys and EDS, is currently successfully operating five Registered Traveler pilots. Beginning in the summer of 2004, the pilots were rolled out in Minneapolis-St. Paul (MSP), Los Angeles (LAX), Houston Intercontinental (IAH), Boston (BOS), and Washington, D.C. (DCA). Each pilot has enrolled roughly 2,000 participants. The pilots were designed to be consistent with the objectives they sought to test. Due to the variances of systems being tested at each airport, re-enrollment of the pilot populations was deemed likely once the end solution was determined. The total number of enrollees of approximately 10,000 “very frequent” fliers was selected in order to minimize any inconveniences (i.e., time, cost, and confusion) necessitated by more sizeable re-enrollment population. While originally

planned to be 90-day pilots, we have extended all five pilots through September 2005 to allow further operational analysis.

The RT Pilot Program introduces the use of biometric technology and a voluntary security assessment process for the U.S. domestic traveling population. In developing the biometric component of the RT Pilot Program, TSA incorporated the use of dual biometrics (fingerprint and iris). In establishing the pilots, TSA incorporated current and emerging biometric standards. The use of advanced commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) technology for gathering and authenticating biometrics and biographical information has allowed the program to avoid unwarranted delays in launching the pilots. Consequently, the agency has been able to concentrate its energies on testing different configurations of COTS systems and various operational models, assessing the results, and compiling best practices.

The efficacy of the pilot programs, in terms of effect on both security and service, is being analyzed this summer. This analysis will include a metrics analysis examining enrollment, checkpoint operations, overall operations, biometrics, call centers/customer service, security assessments, systems integration, and use of tokens/cards.

The pilot programs were structured specifically to test different operational and technological configurations; therefore they are not interoperable. As a result, we learned a key lesson. COTS technologies are not necessarily interoperable – even if they fully comply to the same Federal standards. TSA is working with the pilots' vendors to create a replicable path to interoperability at the pilot airport sites. While this process requires more time than it would to require vendors to use a set of specific products, TSA believes that our approach will achieve interoperability without sacrificing the potential for technological innovations.

Ultimately, TSA understands that the traveler's ability to take advantages of the benefits of the program at all RT-capable airports is critical for the program's success. TSA is fully engaged with its vendors on creating interoperability at all five original RT pilot airports in the current second phase of the pilot. We hope to demonstrate interoperability by the end of FY 2005.

In conjunction with the RT pilots, we are operating Registered Armed Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) "proof of concept" pilots in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. These pilots began in the fall of 2004; the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 subsequently mandated the establishment of a travel credential for armed LEOs that incorporates biometric identifier technology. Although this program is not identical to the RT Program, we are able to successfully share the program elements and assets that are common to each.

Public-Private Sector Pilot Program

The five current pilots have successfully proven the operational feasibility of the RT concept, processes, and technologies in a practical environment. We are now building

upon the experiences of these pilots and exploring whether to incorporate greater private sector participation, by launching the Private Sector Known Traveler (PSKT) pilot. Development of this pilot in partnership with the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority (GOAA) at Orlando International Airport (MCO), began in September 2004, and we anticipate it will become operational this summer.

Although the PSKT Pilot will be privately administered at the airport, TSA will remain in control of all of the security aspects of the program. The airport authority and its contracted entities will be responsible for procurement, and operational and marketing functions, consistent with TSA guidelines. They will advertise the program, enroll participants and incorporate the mechanics of the biometrics (cards, kiosks, etc.), and maintain staffing at the PSKT line and kiosk. However, all essential security functions will be performed by TSA, including defining policies and operational and technical standards for all aspects of the pilot; conducting the security assessments and adjudications for all enrollees; maintain checkpoint operations at the PSKT lane; and overseeing PSKT pilot performance and compliance.

TSA is exploring the private sector partnership portion because it has potential to offer many benefits over a purely Federal model. The private sector is able to offer greater flexibility in meeting customer expectations and has a financial incentive to do so. It can allow more rapid expansion due to its ability to provide rapid decisions on capital investment. Finally, it is often able to operate much more closely to the local market than a centrally managed system.

The operational aspects of the PSKT pilot are designed to be similar to the five federally-run RT pilots, so that Orlando may eventually become interoperable with the existing RT pilot sites. TSA is closely monitoring the progress and performance of this public-private sector sub-pilot to determine if it will provide a replicable and sustainable model for a nationwide rollout, should the Department choose to move in this direction.

The Next Steps

TSA is currently in the process of analyzing the data from the pilot airports (and PSKT data when available) to incorporate best practices into future plans regarding Registered Traveler. In cooperation with stakeholders and other agencies in DHS, TSA is developing solutions to facilitate full-scale implementation of the program. These efforts seek to ensure that RT can achieve the necessary interoperability, scalability, privacy protection, data transmission and storage, and public-private sector partnerships to fulfill RT's symbiotic objectives of enhancing customer service and achieving greater efficiencies in screening at airport security checkpoints. If the program becomes fully operational it is envisioned as becoming self-sustaining through the generation of fees from participants.

Relationship to Other Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Initiatives

Our focus with respect to the RT program, of necessity, is on the continued refinement of a fully operational domestic program. However, we continue to work with other DHS components to determine where systems, equipment and database sharing might be feasible, with a view toward potential future integration with various international travel facilitation programs managed by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the U.S. VISIT Program.

Conclusion

Ultimately, TSA's primary mission is to secure our Nation's transportation systems. The RT Program offers an enhanced travel experience for travelers who wish to participate. But, there is no compromise on security.

In 2005, TSA has pursued several avenues to further refine and enhance the Registered Traveler Program. TSA has been gathering and analyzing data from the five federally run pilots to ensure an accurate and secure solution that is accessible to the U.S. domestic traveling population. TSA has developed and will shortly deploy the PSKT subpilot at Orlando International Airport to test the functionality of a private sector partnership model and conduct market analysis with a larger population. The program is undertaking the preparatory work needed to meet all regulatory requirements necessary to implement the Department's and Congress's decision about the future of Registered Traveler. Finally, in partnership with other vetting programs, TSA has been developing a scalable infrastructure for data screening and vetting to provide the capacity to allow program expansion, if approved.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information. TSA looks forward to working with the Subcommittee as we continue our efforts to strengthen homeland security. I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.